

The President's Daily Brief



4 October 1969

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*FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY***SOVIET UNION - COMMUNIST CHINA**

We have nothing to confirm Radio Belgrade's assertion on Wednesday that "the evacuation of the Soviet and Chinese units stationed in the immediate vicinity of the border... has started," but we consider a significant pullback by regular forces unlikely. On the Chinese side there are simply not many regular troops stationed near the border. The Soviets do have large troop concentrations in the border region, but are tied to the Trans-Siberian Railroad, which supplies them and which they are assigned to defend. The two sides may, however, have worked out an agreement whereby their border guard units would operate a bit farther from the frontier.

Satellite photography in August did disclose that a Soviet motorized rifle regiment had been withdrawn from an exposed position in a small salient on the Sinkiang border. This almost certainly was an example of military prudence, however, and not an effort to lessen tensions. (See The President's Daily Brief of 5 September.)

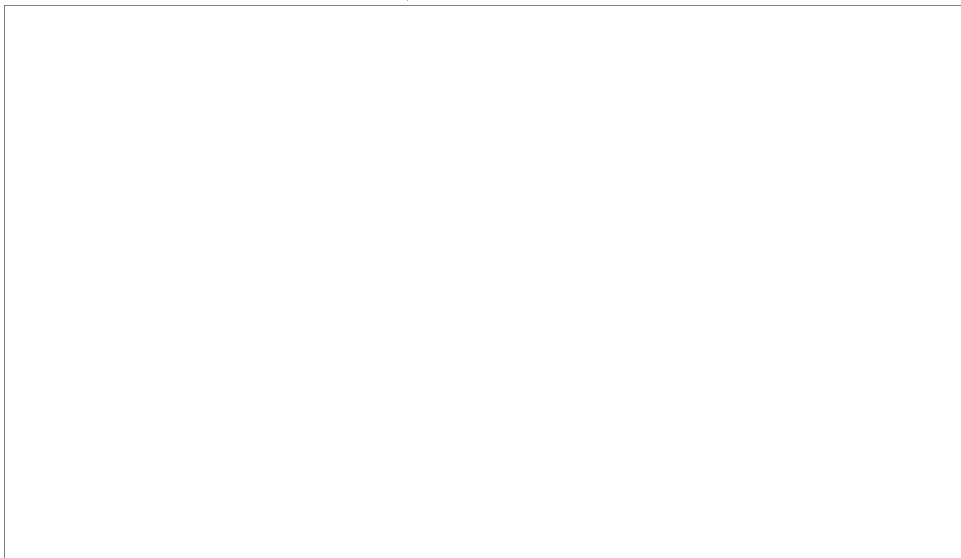
The Belgrade report is quoting Soviet sources. All the stories about a reduction in border tension, in fact, have come out of Moscow; the Chinese, except for their brief announcement of the Chou-Kosygin meeting, have been completely silent on the subject.

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LIBYA

Newsweek's Armand de Borchgrave, after trying for days, finally managed to interview a member of Libya's Revolutionary Command Council late Thursday night. His interlocutor refused to give his name and had removed his badges of rank, but he said he was 25 and had been a lieutenant. He gave the following glimpses of the regime's attitudes and policies:

--The government's first priority is to "join the Arab world." This will mean a more militant policy in general and might include sending a contingent to the Suez Canal.

--The second priority is economic diversification, better utilization of oil revenues, and agricultural improvement.

--Third is a 50 percent cut in the bureaucracy.

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--When asked if the Wheelus base agreement would be terminated, the council member said, "That is so obvious it is not worth discussing." He said, "Maybe, could be" when asked if the agreement would be terminated before it expires in December 1971.

--He refused to say how big the council was, but indicated it had fewer than 15 members. Their average age, he said, was 28.

--The ban on liquor is permanent, as is the Arabization of Libyan street signs. The council member praised the curfew as a device to restore family life, but he said it will not last much longer.

De Borchgrave told the US Embassy that his interlocutor was "obviously bright, sincere, and fairly sophisticated." He comments that the council obviously has not worked out some of its positions fully, but it has very firm convictions on a good many subjects.

BRAZIL

The army high command has selected General Emilio Medici to succeed President Costa e Silva, and Medici has agreed to accept. The next step in the process is the approval of the joint high command of the armed services. This is expected to come on Monday. The designation will then be subject to approval by the reconstituted congress, but under the circumstances that is little more than a formality.

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